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MIDNIGHT SONS
UNLIMITED
FEATURING:
THE MAN-THING
BLADE
STRANGE
SCARLET WITCH
DIRECT EDITION
$3.95 US / $5.35 CAN
LEE SULLIVAN '94

MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED

"A KYND OF MAGICK"

featuring

BLADE, STRANGE, SCARLET WITCH, MODRED THE MYSTIC, AND MAN-THING

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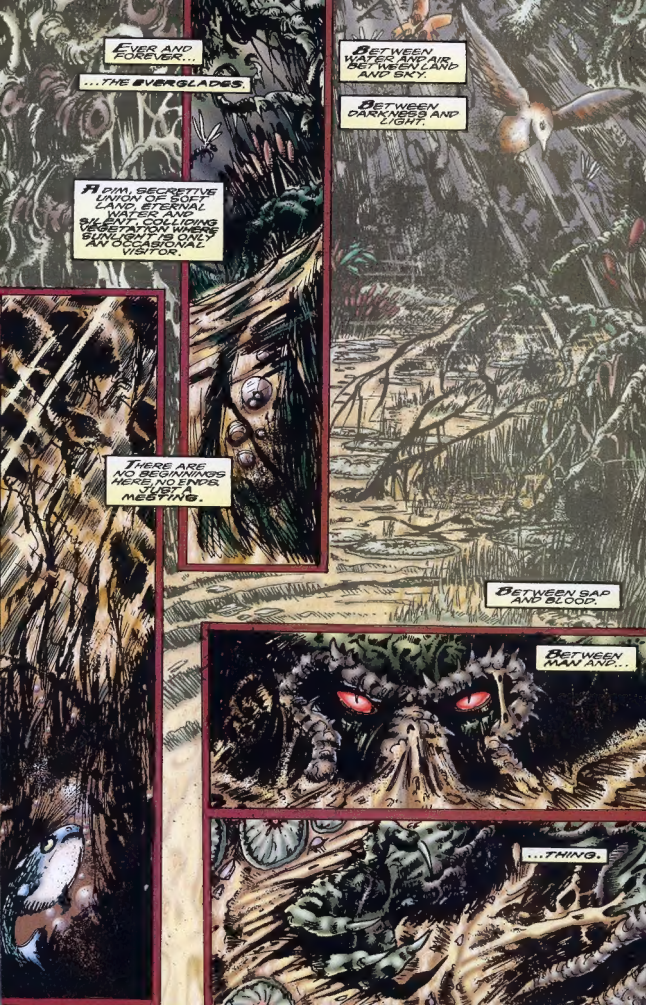
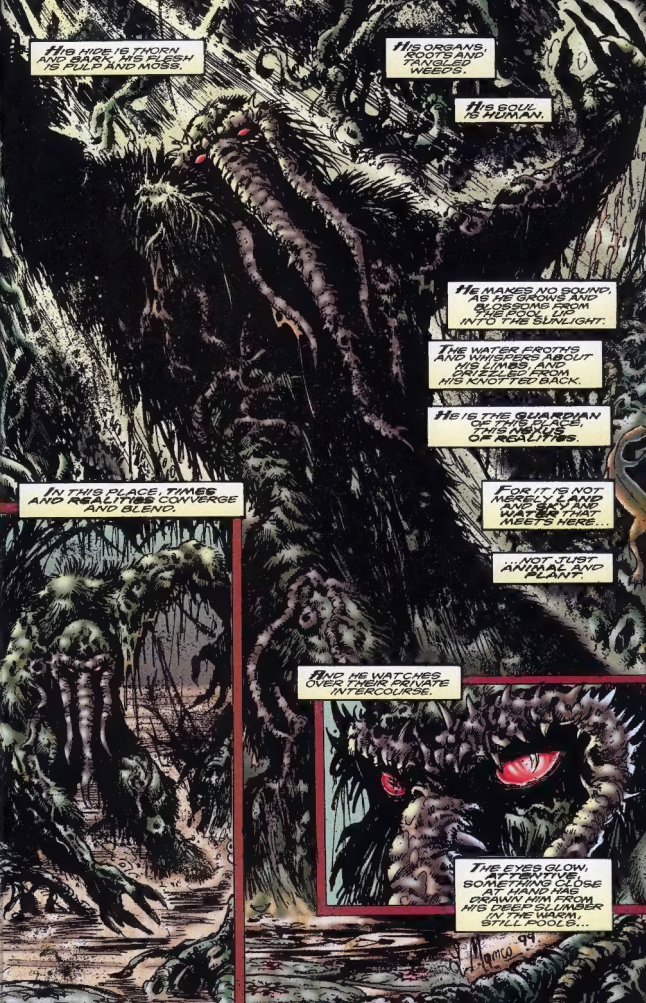
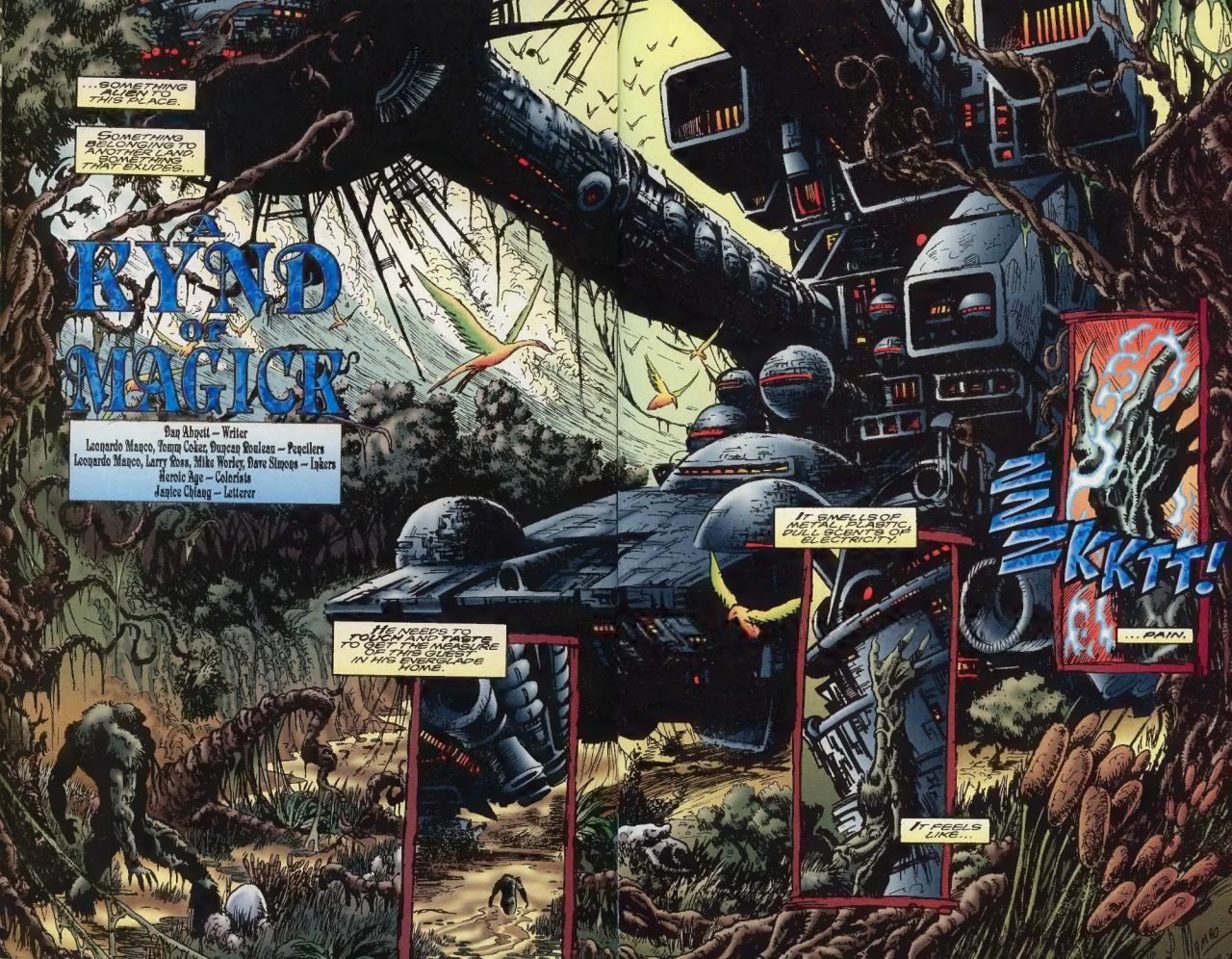
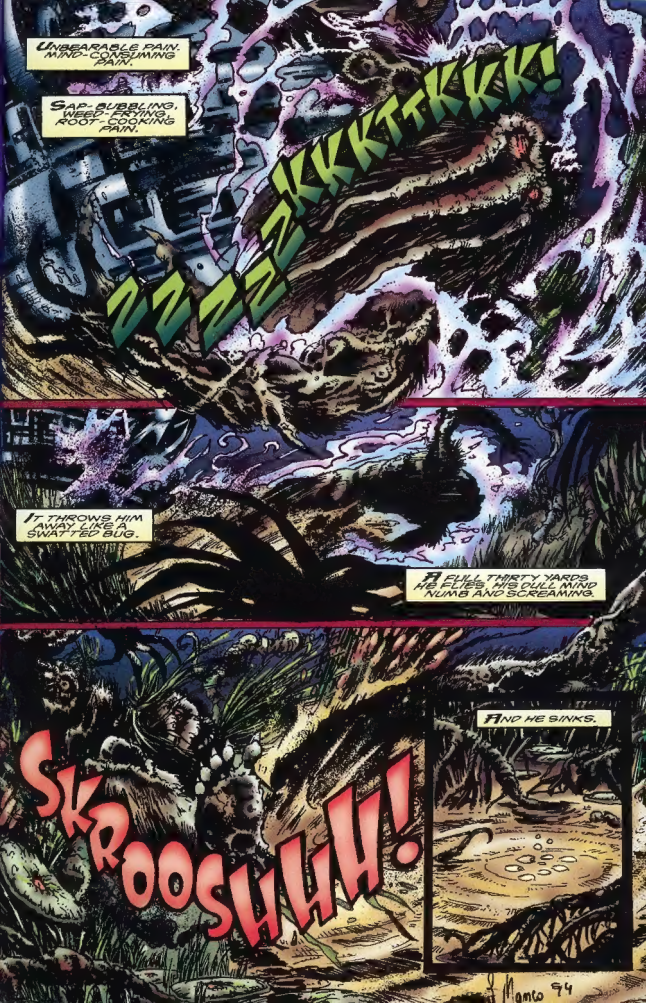
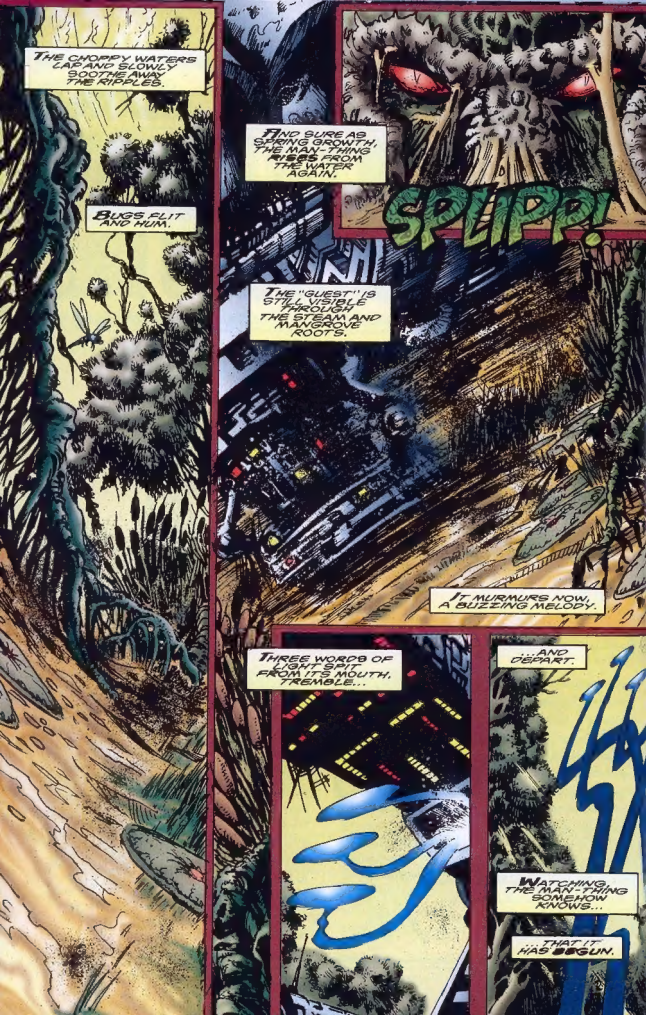

EVER AND FOREVER...
...THE EVERGLADES.
A DIM, SECRETIVE UNION OF SOFT LAND, ETERNAL WATER, AND SWEAT-DRENCHING VEGETATION WHERE SUNLIGHT ONLY AN OCCASIONAL VISITOR.
THERE ARE NO BEGINNINGS HERE, NO ENDS. JUST A MEETING.
BETWEEN WATER AND AIR, BETWEEN LAND AND SKY.
BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT.
BETWEEN SAP AND BLOOD.
BETWEEN MAN AND...
...THING.

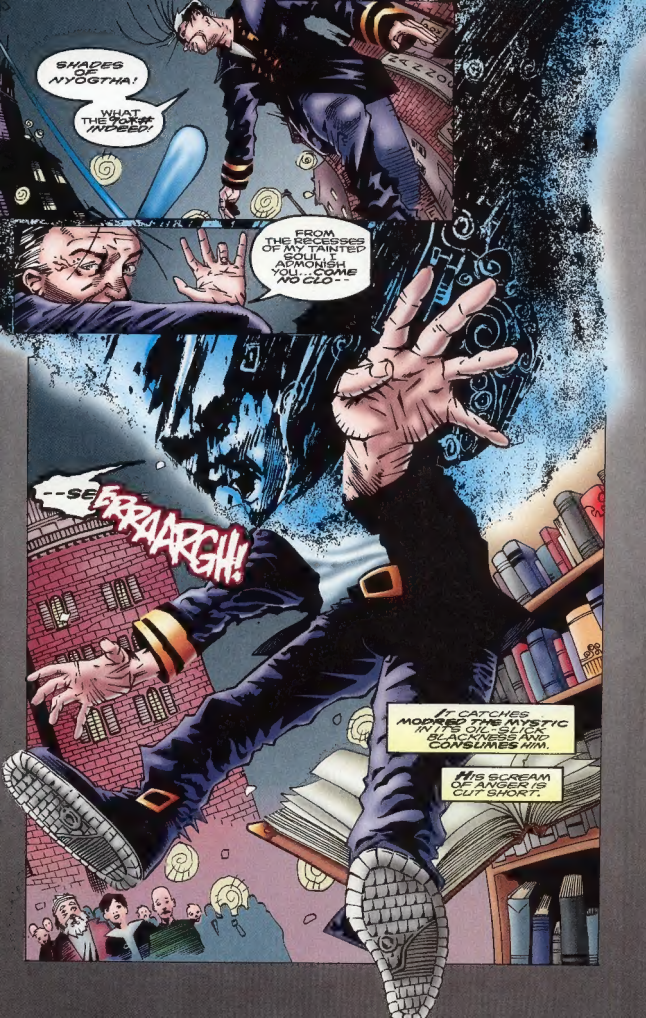

His hide is thorn and bark, his flesh is fur and moss.
His organs, roots and tangled weeds.
His soul is human.
He makes no sound, as he grows and blossoms from the pool, lit into the sunlight.
The water froths and whispers about his limbs, and drizzles from his knotted back.
He is the Guardian of this place, this nexus of realities.
In this place, times and realities converge and blend.
For it is not mere sky and land and water that meets here...
...but just animal and plant.
And he watches over their private intercourse.
The eyes glow, attentive, as something close at hand has drawn him from his deep slumber in the warm, still pools...


...SOMETHING ALIEN TO THIS PLACE.
SOMETHING BELONGING TO ANOTHER LAND, SOMETHING THAT REEKS...
A RYND OF MAGICK
Dan Abnett – Writer
Leonardo Manco, Tommy Coker, Duncan Rouleau – Pencilers
Leonardo Manco, Larry Koss, Mike Worley, Dave Simons – Inkers
Heroic Age – Colorists
Janice Chiang – Letterer
IT NEEDS TO TOUCH AND TASTE TO GIVE ITS MEASURE OF THIS QUEST IN HIS EVERBLADE ROME.
IT SMELLS OF METALLIC PLASTIC DULL SCENTS OF ELECTRICITY.
IT FEELS LIKE...
KKTT!
...PAIN.

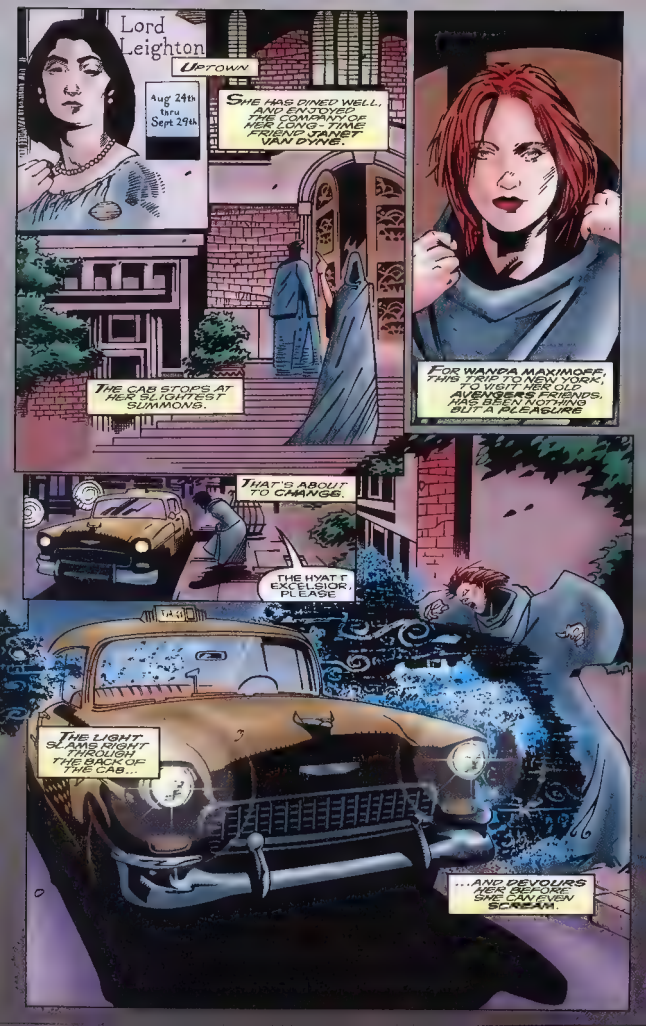

UNBEARABLE PAIN. MIND-CONSUMING PAIN.
SAP-BUBBLING, WEEP-BOILING, ROOT-COOKING PAIN.
2222ZKKKTTKKK!
IT THROWS HIM AWAY LIKE A SWATTED BUG.
A FULL THIRTY YARDS. HE FEELS HIS FULL MIND NUMB AND SCREAMING.
SKROOSHHH!
AND HE SINKS.


THE CHOPPY WATERS CALM AND SLOWLY SOOTHE AWAY THE RIPPLES.
BUGS FLIT AND HUM.
AND SURE AS SPRING GROWTH, THE MAN-THING RISES FROM THE WATER AGAIN.
SPLIPP!
THE "GUEST" IS STILL VISIBLE THROUGH THE SYCAMORE AND MANGROVE ROOTS.
IT MURMURS NOW, A BUZZING MELODY.
THREE WORDS OF LIGHT BEAM FROM ITS MOUTH, TREMBLE...
AND DEPART.
WATCHING, THE MAN-THING SOMEHOW KNOWS...
THAT IT HAS DOGUN.

GREENWICH VILLAGE...
...TEN-THIRTY ON A FRIDAY NIGHT.
BLEEKER CAFE
USED BOOKS
WALL RECORDS
BUSTLE. NOISE. ACTIVITY...
NANNO'S FAST PAWN
...INQUIRY.
WELL, SIR...
DETOWINE'S ARCANA, VOLUME I, A GOWDERIZED TRANSLATION, NO DOUBT.
...YOU'VE A GOOD EYE FOR BARGAINS, THAT'S FOR SURE.
...THE DETOWINE THEY CAME FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION IN INNSMOUTH THAT I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE THE PICK OF.
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, MAKE ME AN OFFER. THE BINDING ALONE IS EXCEPTIONAL.
THE BINDING ALONE IS USELESS IF THE CONTENTS ARE IMMERSHED.
IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CENSORED BY AN EVANGELIST. A FAST EVANGELIST.
HOWEVER, I'LL GIVE YOU THIRTY DOLLARS FOR THE BINDING.
HOLY--
--WHAT THE @#$% IS THAT?

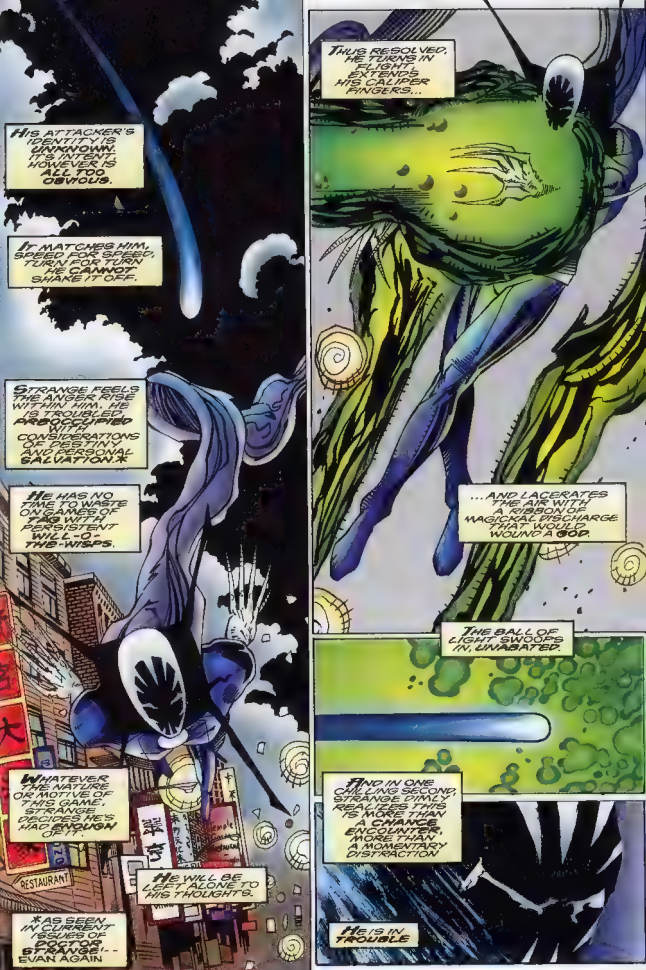

SHADES OF NYOGTHA!
WHAT THE YOG#$ INDEED!
FROM THE RECESSES OF MY TAINTED SOUL I ADMONISH YOU... COME NO CLO--
--SE
ERRAARGH!
IT CATCHES MODRED THE MYSTIC IN ITS OILY ICK BLACKNESS AND CONSUMES HIM.
HIS SCREAM OF ANGER IS CUT SHORT.

And he is gone.
The book-seller reaches for the fallen Detowine, but it feels warm to his touch...
...strangely warm...
And as he opens it...
The pages shiver out and burn.
What the h--?
Smouldering scraps of paper drift down around him, from the night sky...
But of his errant while customer, there is no longer any sign.


Lord Leighton
Aug 24th thru Sept 29th
Uptown
She has dined well, and enjoyed the company of her long-time friend, Janet Van Dyne.
The cab stops at her slightest summons.
For Wanda Maximoff, this trip to New York, to visit her old Avengers friends, has been nothing but a pleasure
That's about to change.
The Hyatt Excelsior please
The light slams right through the back of the cab...
...and devours her before she can even scream.

SHE FEELS HERSELF LIFTED. HELPLESS.
SHE FEELS HER BODY AND HER WILL GO DEAD.
SHE WONDERS WHY.
BUT THE SCARLET WITCH'S QUESTION REMAINS UNANSWERED.
JUST FOR NOW.
THE CAB DRIVER GAWPS AT THAT'S LEFT OF HIS FARE: AN EMPTY CLOAK ON THE SIDEWALK..

SIMULTANEOUSLY..
...THE WINDS ABOVE THE HARBOR ARE BITTERLY COLD, BUT THE SILENT, IMPASSIVE SENTINEL DOES NOT FEEL THEM.
THE BEING CALLED STRANGER FLOATS, MOTIONLESS...
*THIS STORY TAKES PLACE PREVIOUS TO DOCTOR STRANGE #72!...
EVAN
...AT LIBERTY...
FOR NOW, AT LEAST!"
THE LIGHT SPEARS TOWARDS HIM, FAST AS THOUGHT.
FASTER STILL, HE VEERS.
...AND ACCELERATES AWAY ACROSS THE WATER.


His attacker's identity is unknown. It's true. However is all too obvious.
It matches him, speed for speed, turn for turn. He cannot shake it off.
Strange feels the anger rise within him. He is troubled. Preoccupied with considerations of power and personal salvation.*
He has no time to waste on games of this sort. Not when persistent will-o-the-wisps.
Whatever the nature of the motive of this game, Strange decides he's had enough of it.
He will be left alone to his thoughts.
*As seen in current issues of Doctor Strange! - Evan again
Thus resolved, he turns in flight, extends his caliper fingers...
...and lacerates the air with a ribbon of magickal discharge that would wound a god.
The ball of light swoops in, unabated.
And in one chilling second, Strange dimly realizes this is more than a chance encounter, more than a momentary distraction
He is in trouble

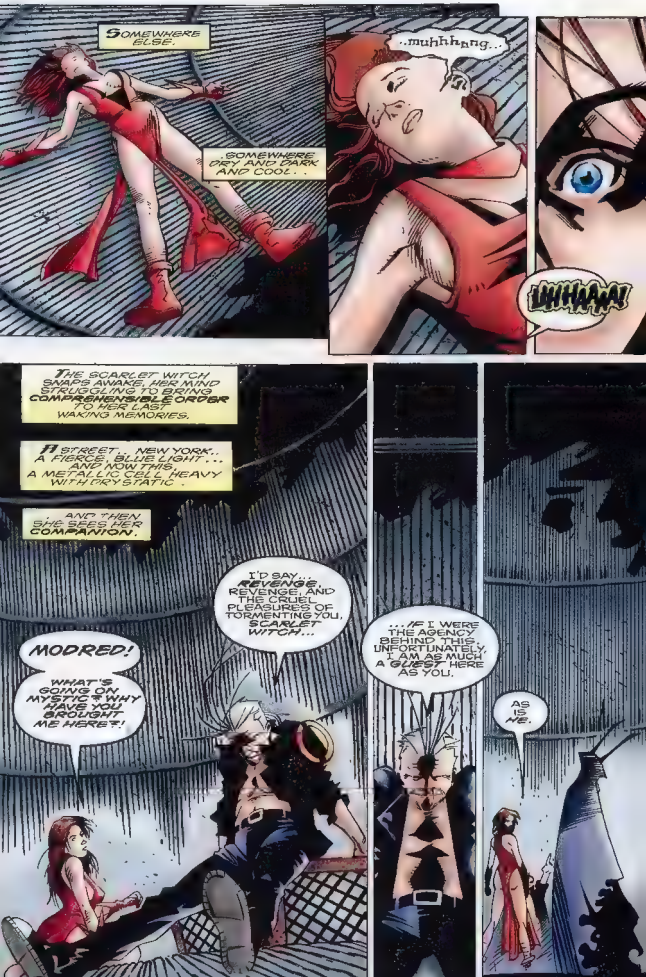
HE CONSIDERS HIS OPTIONS.
THE ELEMENTAL ARMOR OF THE EARTH ITSELF MAY SERVE HIM BEST.
HE CLOAKS HIMSELF IN IT, HOPING TO LOSE HIS IMPLACABLE PURSUER IN ITS ANCIENT DEPTHS.
SHFFOPP!
THWUUPP!
HIS RUSE FAILS.
HELPLESS, GIGANTOR HOWLING OUT HIS FRUSTRATED RAGE, STRANGE IS BORNE ALOFT.
...AND INTO THE NIGHT.
HUHH? WASSAT...?

SATURDAY MORNING IN GARLAND, FLORIDA...
A FRESHWATER BREEZE WHISPERS ACROSS THE CRANE-HAUNTED COVES OF THE CLAPBOARD RESIDENCES
ENGLAND'S MYSTERIES
ON SARASOTA STREET, GLENN FENNY'S OCCULTIST ANTIQUES STORE HAS BEEN OPEN FOR TWO HOURS
AND NOW, AS FENNY CONSIDERS FIXING HIS ELEVEN O'CLOCK MUG OF COFFEE...
...HE GREETS HIS FIRST CUSTOMERS OF THE DAY.
WELL, GOOD MORNING TO YOU...
...AND HOW CAN I HELP YOU, GENTLEMEN?
THERE IS ART HERE.
WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE CULT.

WHOA, NOW! WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT A CULT?
ARE YOU GUYS FEDS? A.T.F.?
QUERY TERMS?
ADJUST INTERROGATIVE. RESTATE.
AGREED.
WE ARE NOT "FEDS EIGHTY EFF." WE SEEK ART.
WE ARE INTERESTED IN ART.
I THINK YOU FELLERS BETTER BE ON YOUR WAY...
NONCOMPLIANCE.
AGREED.
REINFORCING INTERROGATIVE WITH PHYSICAL COERCION.
FWUMM!

TELL US OF THE ART NOW.
TZZZ!
OVERSHHIT!
SHAAAKKK!
THE ART. THE CULT. EXPLAIN. BEGIN.
THERE'S JUST A FEW OF US, LOCAL FOLK! WE PABBLE. NOTHING SINISTER. WE'VE GOT A FEW BITS AND PIECES OF INTEREST...
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT!
SEARCH FIND RETRIEVE.
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

WE ARE SEARCHWARE OF THE CLAVE YOU ARE FROTO-KYND.
YOU WILL RECEIVE NO MORE INPUT.
EEAAAARRGGHH!
PLLEEAASSEE...
nngghhh. kk...
PROTO-KYND ERASED.
ACCELERATE SEARCH AND PREPARE FOR LOCATION EXIT.


SOMEWHERE ELSE.
SOMEWHERE DRY AND DARK AND COOL...
..muhhhang...
UHHAAA!
THE SCARLET WITCH SNAPS AWAKE, HER MIND STRUGGLING TO BRING COMPREHENSIBLE ORDER TO HER LAST WAKING MEMORIES.
A STREET... NEW YORK... A FIERCE, BLUE LIGHT... AND NOW THIS... A METALLIC CELL. HEAVY WITH HYSTATIC...
AND THEN SHE SEES HER COMPANION.
MODRED!
WHAT'S GOING ON, MYSTIQUE? WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?!
I'D SAY REVENGE, REVENGE, AND THE CRUEL PLEASURES OF TORMENTING YOU, SCARLET WITCH...
...IF I WERE THE AGENCY BEHIND THIS. UNFORTUNATELY, I AM AS MUCH A GUEST HERE AS YOU.
AS IS HE.

SCARLET WITCH TO FORCE WORKS HQ! EMERGENCY RESPONSE! SCARLET WITCH TO FORCE WOR--
DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH, WITCH. YOUR COMMUNICATOR WON'T WORK IN HERE.
THIS PRISON IS MOST EFFECTIVE.
YOU WILL ALSO FIND THAT YOUR CELEBRATED POWERS WON'T FUNCTION IN HERE EITHER.
I TAKE IT YOU WERE ABDUCTED BY A BLUE BALL OF ELECTRICITY THAT DEFIED YOUR ATTEMPTS TO WARP AGAINST IT?
I REALLY DIDN'T GET MUCH CHANCE TO TRY. HAD YOU EVER SEEN THAT TYPE OF MANIFESTATION BEFORE?
DEFERRING TO MY SUPERIORS, WITCH? I'M FLATTERED
DON'T BE. YOU'VE BEEN AROUND FOR CENTURIES, MYSTIC. I FIGURED EVEN YOU MUST HAVE PICKED UP SOMETHING USEFUL IN ALL THAT TIME.
Hmmpff! I'M FLATTERED NEVERTHELESS!
IN ANY CASE, MY ANSWER IS NO. THIS IS ALL NEW TO ME.
BUT I'M SURE OF ONE THING---IT WAS TECHNOLOGY! HUGELY ADVANCED AND WITH THE APPEARANCE OF SORCERY, BUT TECHNOLOGY NEVERTHELESS!

IN MY CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE, TECHNOLOGY IS NEVER A MATCH FOR MAGICK. TO ENCOUNTER A FORM OF IT THAT IS...
ONE THAT CAN ACTUALLY NEGATE MAGICKAL POWERS...
...THE IMPLICATIONS DO NOT ENGAGE ME.
SO WHO IS OUR SILENT CELL-MATE?
HIS CLOTHES REMIND ME OF DOCTOR STRANGE, BUT...
HIS NAME IS STRANGE, BUT HE IS NOT THE DOCTOR WE KNEW.
HE IS A PRETENDER TO THE ROLE... A BARBAROUS HALF-WITTED SWAGGERING WHO LACKS ALL MEASURE OF SUBTLETY
I HAVE HAD SOME DEALINGS WITH HIM BEFORE THIS.*
*IN MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED #3 - - EVAN
STRANGE? I AM THE SCARLET WITCH
I THINK THE THREE OF US SHOULD DISCUSS OUR SITUATION... FOR OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT
STRANGE... WOULD BE... FREE OF THIS. PLACE

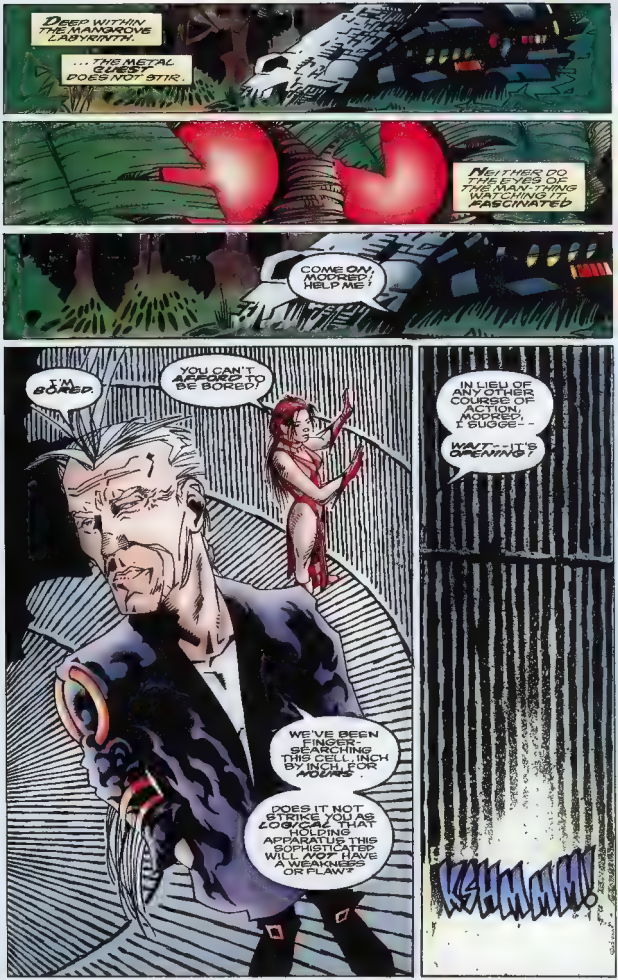
BRAVO, WITCH! THE OAF'S DONE NOTHING BUT STARE AT THE WALL SINCE I CAME TO.
THAT'S SEVERAL MORE WORDS THAN I MANAGED TO GET OUT OF HIM.
YOU NEVER WERE TOO GOOD WITH PEOPLE, WERE YOU, MOCREP?
VERY DROLL, WANDA.
SO... DO WE DO SOMETHING PATHETICALLY CLICHÉD LIKE PUT OUR DIFFERENCES ASIDE AND WORK TOGETHER TO GET OUT OF HERE?
I'D RATHER BURN IN HELL--
...BUT I DON'T THINK WE HAVE ANY CHOICE.
SOMEONE'S GONE TO GREAT TROUBLE TO ABDUCT US AND BRING US HERE.
THE ONLY COMMON FACTOR BETWEEN US THREE IS CODES OF MAGICK.
THAT MUST BE THE MOTIVATION.
AGREED. PROVISIONALLY
THAT'S A START, BUT WE NEED MORE--
WE NEED TO BE... FREE...
MY MY! I'VE NEVER KNOWN HIM SO CHATTY...

GARLAND
A CROWD GATHERS OUTSIDE CLEM FENNY'S SHOP. MOST ARE DRAWN THERE BY MORBID CURIOSITY...
CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CRO
THE FAMED "RUBBERNECK INSTINCT"...
BUT NOT ALL.
POLICE
AND I'M TELLING YOU NOT THE CORONER'S OFFICE CANNOT REMOVE THE STIFF UNTIL THE BOGART'S BEEN TO VIEW IT.
AND HOW LONG HE'S GONNA BE, SHERIFF?
HE'S HERE WHAT'S THE STORY?
BASTLY, SHERIFF...
I'M LOOKING AT THAT AND I HAVEN'T PUKED
YOU THE GUY THE FEDS WERE SENDING DOWN?
HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE A FANCY EXPERT?

SO FILL ME IN.
DON'T ASK ME! I DON'T DABBLE IN THIS BULL!
BUT YOU CAN TELL BY THE EMPTY SHELVES AND BUSTED-UP DISPLAYS. HE WAS CLEANED OUT SURE ENOUGH.
THIS FENNY... WAS HE A MEMBER OF A CLUB OR CULT?
THE STIFF IS CLEM FENNY, LOCAL OCCULT DEALER
SOMEONE... UH... MELTED HIM... AND RIPPED OFF A LOT OF HIS STOCK.
WHAT'S MISSING?
A FEW OF 'EM USED TO MEET IN A ROOM OVER THE POOL HALL. FUNNY BANGS AND STUFF.
STRICTLY LITTLE LEAGUE. NOT WHAT YOU'D CALL A CULT.
IT WASN'T "LITTLE LEAGUE" TODAY.
BOOK OF WITCHES
BY THE WAY, FENNY WASN'T THERE. THE LIFE FORCE WAS DRAINED OUT OF HIM.
HOLY--!
THERE HAVE BEEN TEN ATTACKS LIKE THIS THROUGH THE SOUTHWEST IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS.
SAME BASIC M.O. THE TARGETS WERE SMALL-TIME OCCULTS, PRIVATE COLLECTORS, A FEW VOODOO COVENS.

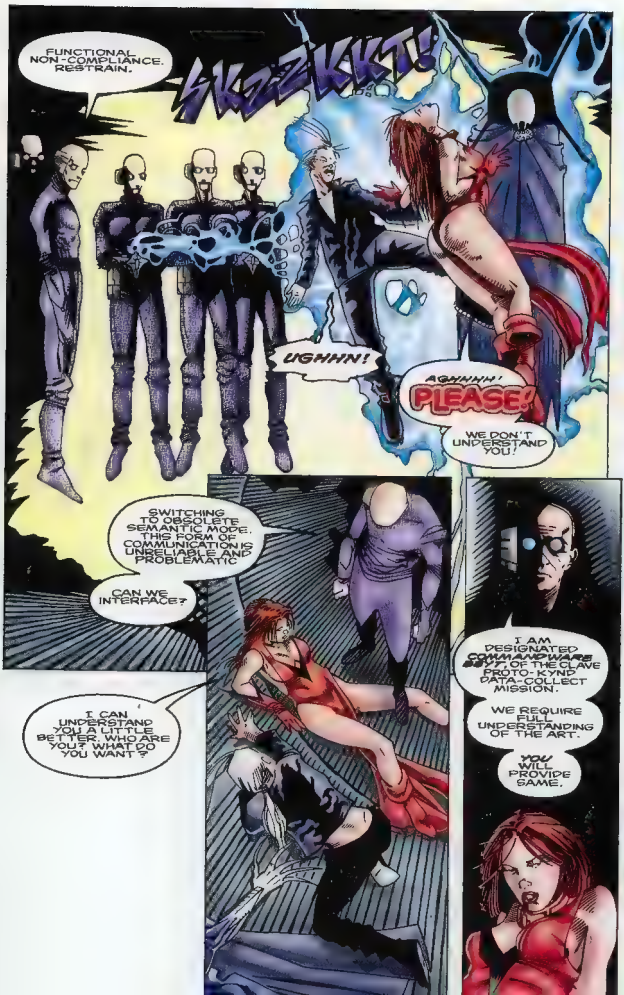
IS THAT ...?
WELL, THAT BEATS ALL. THE FEDS SENT SOME *JUNGLE WITCHDOCTOR* DOWN HERE TO DEAL WITH A CASE LIKE THIS...
SHERIFF LUMLEY?
I'M AGENT BONHAM, FBI. I THINK YOU'RE EXPECTING ME?
THE PERPETRATORS COULD STILL BE IN THE AREA.
I HAVE TO MOVE ON THIS FAST.
NOW WHERE'S THE--- *OH MY LORD! UHHHGGD!*
WHAT THE---?
IF YOU'RE THE #1 FBI EXPERT...
"... WHO THE HECK WAS THAT *OTHER* GUY?"

FOR A WEEK AND A HALF, BLADE HAS BEEN ON THE TRAIL OF THESE KILLERS.
THEY TAKE LIVES WITH GREAT, UNCONVENTIONAL FORM OF VAMPIRISM, BUT ONE THAT HE IS EQUALLY DETERMINED TO STAMP OUT.
THIS IS THE CLOSEST HE'S BEEN TO THEM.
THE CYPRESS TREES SIGH CONSPIRATORIALLY ABOVE HIM AS HE TAKES OUT HIS WITCH COMPASS.
A REACING NOW. THAT'S ALL HE NEEDS.
THE COMPASS WHIRRS. IT'S BRASS DIAL SPUN BY INVISIBLE FINGERS.
IT TELLS HIM WHERE THEY ARE...
...AND BLADE'S VAMPIRE HUNTER SENSE GOES TO WORK.

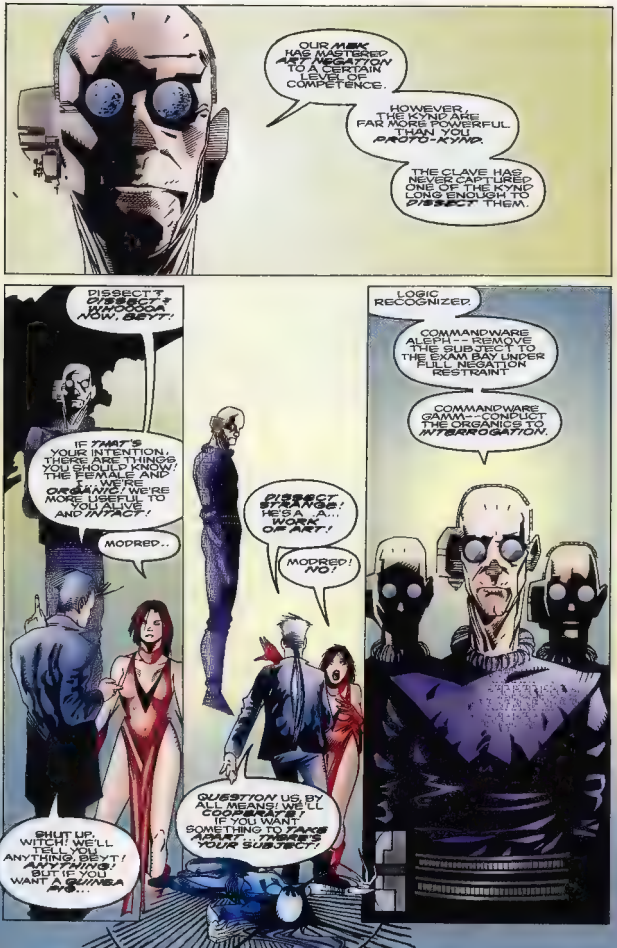

DEEP WITHIN THE MANGROVE LABYRINTH.
...THE METAL CLERGY DOES NOT STIR.
NEITHER DO THE EYES OF THE MAN-THING WATCHING IT FASCINATED
COME ON, MODRED! HELP ME!
I'M BORED.
YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO BE BORED!
WE'VE BEEN FINGER-SEARCHING THIS CELL, INCH BY INCH, FOR HOURS!
DOES IT NOT STRIKE YOU AS LOGICAL THAT HOLDING APPARATUS THIS SOPHISTICATED WILL NOT HAVE A WEAKNESS OR FLAW?
IN LIEU OF ANY OTHER COURSE OF ACTION, MODRED, I SUGGE--
WAIT--IT'S OPENING!
KSHMMM!

NONE OF MY DOING, I ASSURE YOU!
MODRED! STRANGE! WE'LL COVER EACH OTHER!
AGAINST WHAT? I REALLY AM WEARING OF YOUR HEROIC VOCABULARY, WITCH.
WHY DON'T WE WAIT AND SEE WHO'S BEHIND THE DOOR?
VERY WELL BUT BE PREPARED.
YOU TOO, STRANGE.
I WILL BE FREE!
STRANGE! YOU BENIGHTED DOLT! DON'T GET BACK! DON'T PROVOKE TH--
ZZZ

CLAVE COMMANDWARE REQUIRES INTERFACE WITH PROTO-KYND SPECIMENS. GO TO CO-OPERATIVE STANDBY AND WAIT.
STRANGE!
"PROTO-KYND"? "CO-OPERATIVE STANDBY"?
WHAT THE %**#@ ARE YOU BLEEPING ABOUT?


FUNCTIONAL NON-COMPLIANCE. RESTRAIN.
SKZZKKT!
AGHHHH!
PLEASE!
WE DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU!
LIGHHHN!
SWITCHING TO OBSOLETE SEMANTIC MODE. THIS FORM OF COMMUNICATION IS UNRELIABLE AND PROBLEMATIC
CAN WE INTERFACE?
I AM DESIGNATED COMMANDWARE UNIT, OF THE CLAVE PROTO-KYND DATA-COLLECT MISSION.
WE REQUIRE FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE ART.
YOU WILL PROVIDE SAME.
I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU A LITTLE BETTER. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

THE ART? MAGICAT?
YOU WANT TO LEARN ABOUT MAGICK FROM US? WHY?
THE CLAVE HAS NO OBLIGATION TO SUPPLY SUCH DATA.
PLEASE! COMMANDWARE BEYT... IF THAT'S YOUR NAME...
...MY FRIEND IS RIGHT.
WE DON'T PROCESS DATA AS COMPREHENSIVELY AS YOU SEEM TO. KNOWING YOUR MOTIVATION...
...WILL HELP US RESPOND TO YOUR QUERIES MORE PRECISELY.
LOGIC RECOGNIZED.
ASSIMILATE THE FOLLOWING: THE CLAVE ARE PROGRAMMED INTO A LONG-TERM CONFLICT WITH THE KYND
THE KYND ARE OTHER-KINDED, AND USERS OF THE ART.
CONFLICT WILL ONLY BE RESOLVED IF GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ART IS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE CLAVE.
INTRIGUING! YOU'RE AT WAR WITH A MAGICAL RACE AND YOU WANT TO CRACK THEIR SECRETS BY STUDYING US?
PARDON ME, COMMANDWARE, BUT YOU SEEM TO COMBAT OUR SKILLS WELL ENOUGH!


OUR MEK HAS MASTERED ART NEGATION TO A CERTAIN LEVEL OF COMPETENCE.
HOWEVER, THE KYND ARE FAR MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU PROTO-KYND.
THE CLAVE HAS NEVER CAPTURED ONE OF THE KYND LONG ENOUGH TO DISSECT THEM.
DISSECT? DISSECT A WHOOOA NOW, BEYT!
IF THAT'S YOUR INTENTION, THERE ARE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW! THE FEMALE AND THE FEMALE WE'RE ORGANIC! WE'RE MORE USEFUL TO YOU ALIVE AND INTACT!
MODRED..
DISSECT STRANGE! HE'S A... WORK OF ART!
MODRED! NO?
SHUT UP, WITCH! WE'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING, BEYT! ANYTHING! BUT IF YOU WANT A SUMBEA AS...
QUESTION US, BY ALL MEANS! WE'LL COOPERATE! IF YOU WANT SOMETHING TO TAKE APART... THERE'S YOUR SUBJECT!
LOGIC RECOGNIZED.
COMMAND WARE ALEPH -- REMOVE THE SUBJECT TO THE EXAM BAY UNDER FULL NEGATION RESTRAINT
COMMAND WARE GAMM-- CONDUCT THE ORGANICS TO INTERROGATION.

THE EXAM BAY IS COLD AND STERILE.
"CONSCIOUSNESS" RETURNS TO THE BEING CAT LED STRANGE JUST AS FROGS OF ENERGY BITE DOWN INTO HIS RESTRAINED BODY.
AS THEY RIP INTO THE VERY MAGICK OF HIS BEING..
Uhhh-ghhhh-
AAAIKKK!
THEY HEAR A SCREAM FROM THE DEPTHS OF UNFATHOMED PAIN FOR HIS SOUL!
OUTSIDE, A VESTIGE OF HUMAN SOUL WRAPPED UP INSIDE A TRANCE-VEGETATION SHUDDERS AS IT EMPATHICALLY RESPONDS TO THE AGONIZED CRY
WRACKED WITH SHARP PAIN, THE MAN-THING LURCHES FORWARD...

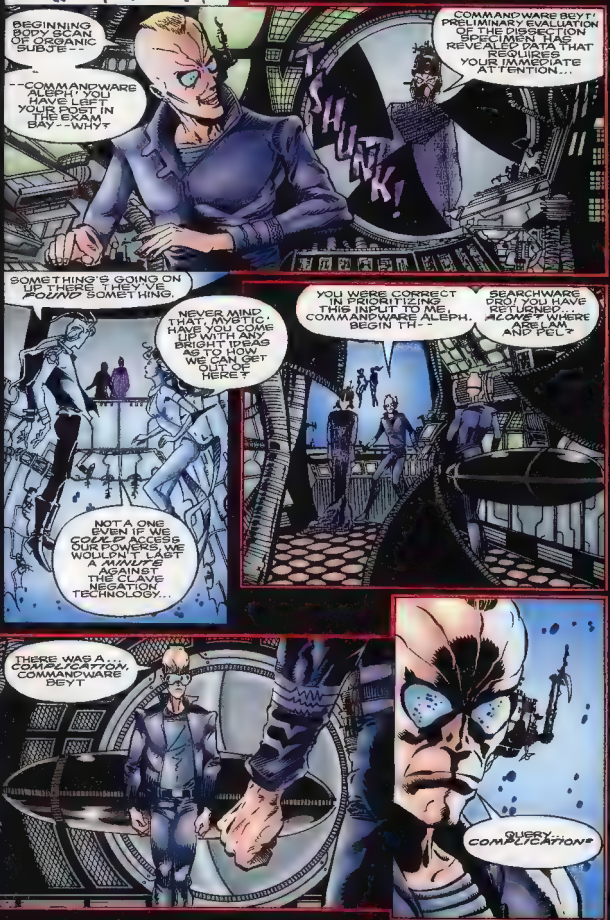
FURTHER OFF, THE CLAVE SEARCHWARE TEAM MAKES ITS WAY BACK TO THE MOTHERSHIP, FLOATING ON ANTI-GRAVITY FIELDS
IT IS A TRIP NOT ALL OF THEM WILL COMPLETE.
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, YOU PIECES OF FILTH!
ALERT! HOSTILE CONTACT!
GIVE IT UP, CREEPS! THE MORE YOU FIGHT...
...THE MORE PAIN I DISH!
I MEAN IT, GEEK!
SLU...
CHOKK!
BZZMM!
UGHKK!

ASSISTANCE, SEARCHWARE!
IN PREPARATION'
BLADE IS PUZZLED. DESPITE THE FANCY WEAPONS, THESE CHARACTERS ARE PACKING. THEY ARE SLOW AND CLUMSY...
AS IF UNVERSED TO PHYSICAL COMBAT.
HI-YOOK!
IT IS AN ADVANTAGE HE MAKES THE MOST OF.
ASSISTANCE..?
SPASHH!
SHHHKKK!
SEARCHWARE PEL SEARCHWARE I AM? RESPOND...
..PLEASE?
FACE IT, BUD. YOU'RE WAY OUTCLASSED.
DON'T GIVE ME ANOTHER EXCUSE.

NOW...WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU?
UGHK!
I THOUGHT I WAS TRACKING A VAMPIRE BUT YOU'RE LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER SEEN.
WE ARE SEARCHWARE OF THE CLAVE. DATA. COLLECT. MISSION.
DATA? WHAT DATA?
DATA CONCERNING THE ARC... WHAT YOU CALL MAGICK. UGHHH!
WHUMMP
WHAT'S IN THE FLOATING COFFIN, BOZO? OPEN IT!
VOCAL AUTHORIZATION-- UNLOCK!
CHKZZM!
OCCULT ARTIFACTS, TALISMANS, MAGICKAL TREATISE..
SO THAT EXPLAINS THE TINGLY... AND THE SCENT MY WITCH COMPASS PICKED UP

WHAT ABOUT THE WONDER SQUAD?
COMMAND WARE ORDERS WERE TO OBTAIN LIFE FORCE SAMPLES OF THE PROTO-KYND WE ENCOUNTERED, AS A SOURCE OF EXPERIENTIAL DATA.
YEAH? AND THEN? WHAT? WHERE WERE YOU TAKING IT ALL?
BACK TO OUR CRAFT.
CRAFT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN--
HOLY-- YOUR EYES! WHAT ARE YOU?
WE ARE CLAVE BEARCHWARE...
NO! I MEAN... ARE YOU FROM... OUTER SPACE OR SOMETHING?
WE ARE NOT EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL
WE ORIGINATE FROM WHAT YOU WOULD CONSIDER TO BE...
...THE FUTURE

ABOARD THE CLAVE MOTHERSHIP...
SO... YOU'VE COME BACK TO EXAMINE THE LINEAGE AND ORIGIN OF YOUR FOE?
AND THE CLAVE, WILL TAKE IT'LL SPRING FROM THE TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURES OF THIS WORLD?
THIS WORLD WHICH YOU INHABIT, WITH ITS INFECTION OF ART, WILL EVOLVE INTO THE ONE I KNOW.
...THE FUTURE? BUT THAT'S EXTRAORDINARY!
IT IS FROM YOU, AND THE PSYCHO-KYND LIKE YOU, WHOSE ACTIVITIES GO UNCHECKED IN THIS AGE.
THAT THE KYND WILL SPRING
HOW DID YOU GET HERE? HAS THE CLAVE MASTERED TIME TRAVEL?
...THE NEXUS OF REALITIES IN THE CITADEL OF EVERAGES!
MODRED! I THINK I KNOW WHERE WE ARE...
IN A LIMITED WAY
WE DISCOVERED A NATURAL NEXUS THAT ALLOWED US TO SEND THIS CRAFT BACK THROUGH THE INTERSTICES OF THE TEMPORAL CONTINUUM.
...THIS NEXUS ALSO SERVES TO CLOAK OUR SHIP FROM DETECTION ON THIS WORLD.
THAT WOULD SEEM TO FIT THE EVIDENCE.

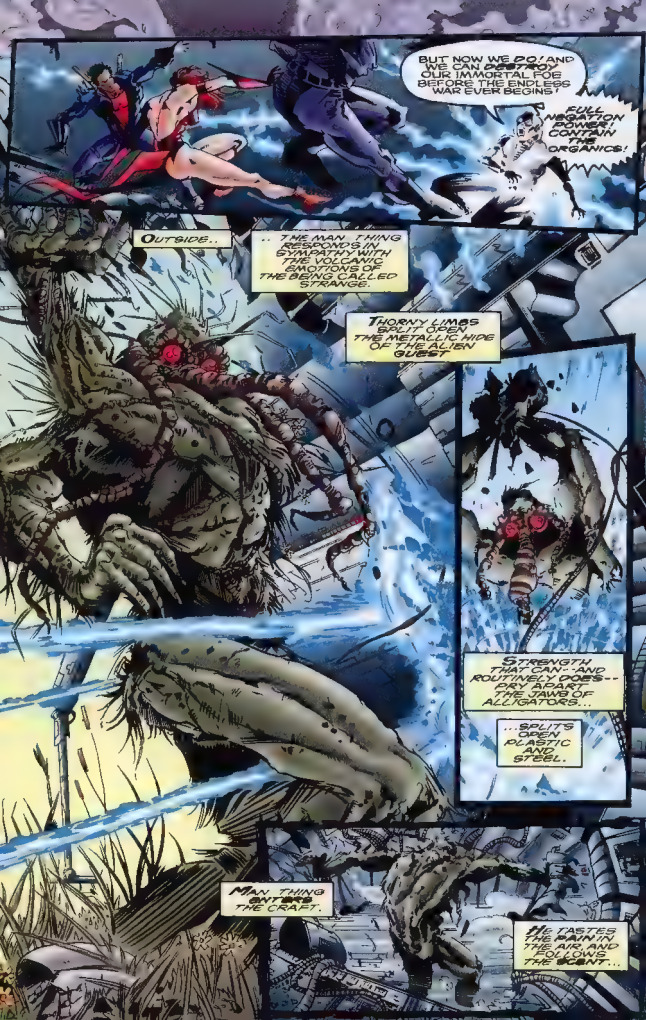

BEGINNING BODY SCAN OF ORGANIC SUBJECT--
--COMMANDWARE ALEPH! YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR POST IN THE EXAM BAY--WHY?
T'SHUNK!
COMMANDWARE BEYT! PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE DISSECTION SPECIMEN HAS REVEALED DATA THAT REQUIRES YOUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION...
SOMETHING'S GOING ON IN THERE! THEY'VE FOUND SOMETHING.
NEVER MIND THAT, MYSTIC. HAVE YOU COME UP WITH ANY BRIGHT IDEAS AS TO HOW WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE?
NOT A ONE EVEN IF WE COULD ACCESS OUR POWERS, WE WOULDN'T LAST A MINUTE AGAINST THE CLAVE NEGATION TECHNOLOGY...
YOU WERE CORRECT IN PRIORITIZING THIS INPUT TO ME, COMMANDWARE ALEPH. BEGIN TH--
SEARCHWARE BEQ! YOU HAVE RETURNED... ALGORYX! WHERE AM I, AND PEL?
THERE WAS A... COMMUNICATION, COMMANDWARE BEYT
QUERY: COMMUNICATION?

ME.
YOUR BUDDY BRO HERE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SMUGGLE ME ON BOARD.
HE DIDN'T LIKE THE IDEA OF BEING ON THE RECEIVING END OF HIS OWN WEAPON.
NOW DON'T MAKE ANY RASH MOVES...
CHK22m!
HE MADE ME DO IT! COMMANDWARE! HE INTENDED TO ERASE ME!
BUT I KNEW YOU WOULD BE CAPABLE OF DESTROYING HIM.
BLADE! IT'S BLADE!
HOW SPLENDID! HE'S JUST IN TIME TO DIE ALONGSIDE US.
THINK ABOUT IT, MODREC! BLADE IS COMMANDING! HE MUST HAVE GOTTEN ABOARD BECAUSE THE CLAVE SYSTEMS WERE BLIND TO HIM...
YOU WILL BE PUNISHED LATER, BRO!
--CONTAIN THE INTRUDER!

HAVE IT YOUR WAY, SPARKY!
TZZSHAKK!
TSZSHAKK!
CONTAIN HIM! CONTAIN HIM NOW!
BLADE CUTS LOOSE IN THE UNEXAMINAR WEAPON, HIS WILD SWORD STRIKE THE MAIN CONSOLE, CRUSHING THE SYSTEMS.
HOW THE *@#&% DO YOU AIM THIS THING?
THE RESULT IS...
...LOUD
SHAAABOOMM!
M-FETCH!
UGHH!
MODRED! THE NEGATION FIELDS DOWN?
HIT THEM WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!
THE SCARLET WITCH BEGINS HER HEX-DANCE..
CHANNELLING AND MANIPULATING THE PROBABILITIES OF REALITY TO HER COMMAND!

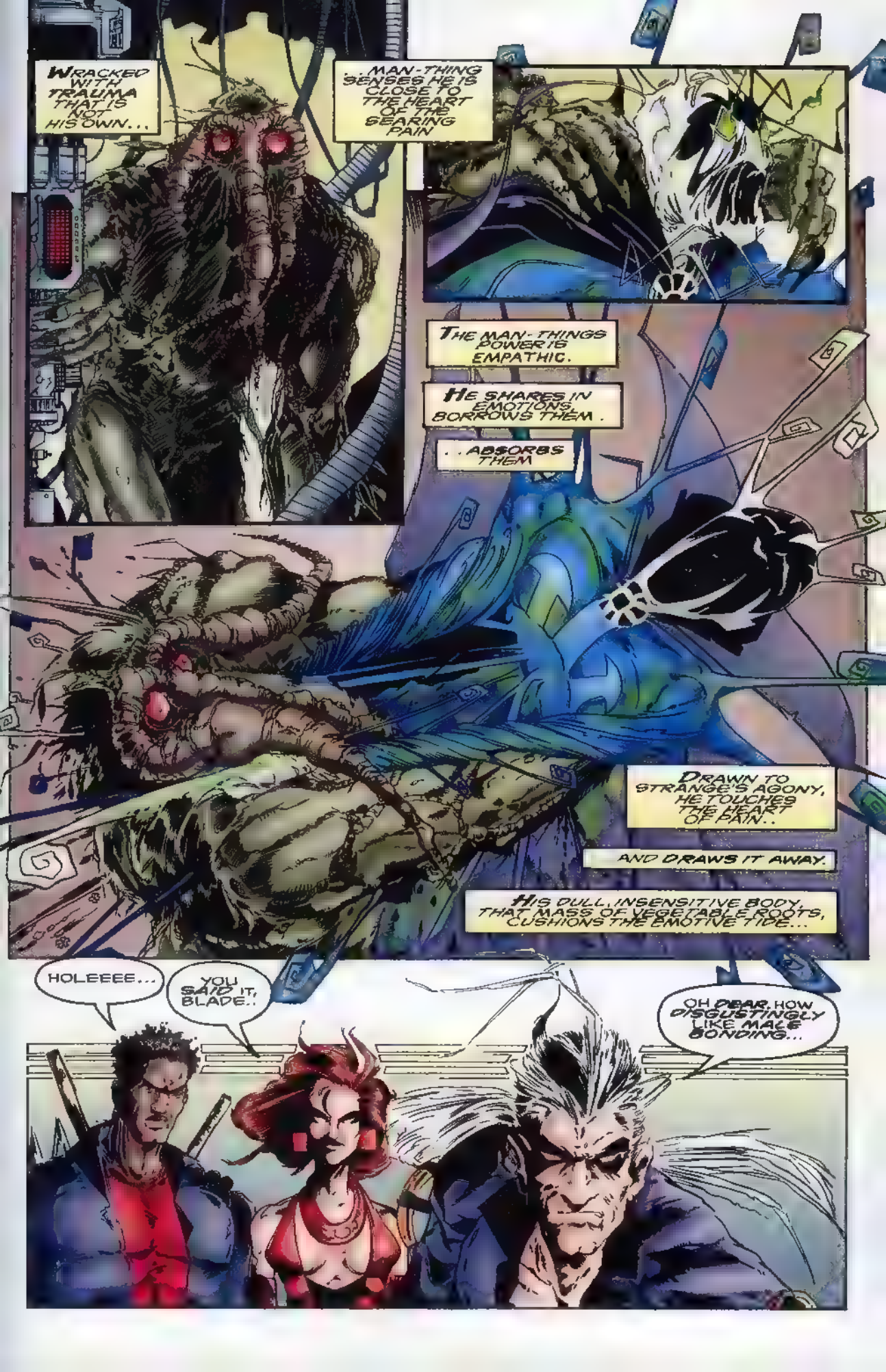
IN RESPONSE, A BLITZ OF MEK-ENERGY TEARS INTO THE CLAVE MACHINERY.
AT HER SIDE, MORDRED THE MYSTIC UNLEASHES HIS OWN BRAND OF NECROMANTIC ONSLAUGHT.
GOTCHA! NOW SHOW US THE EXIT... OR BETTER YET, I'LL SNAP YOUR NECKWARE!
UGHNNNNK!
YOU FOOLS! YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
THE SPECIMEN, STRANGE! WE KNOW WHAT HE IS...
AND YOU'VE SET HIM FREE!
...GOES WILD!
FOR THE CLAVEWARE PRESENT, DEATH IS INSTANTANEOUS
THE EXAM BAY, DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE CLAVE SHIP.
SUDDENLY RELEASED FROM HIS MAGICK-NEGATING RESTRAINTS, THE AGONIZED STRANGE...
AND EXCRUTIATING.

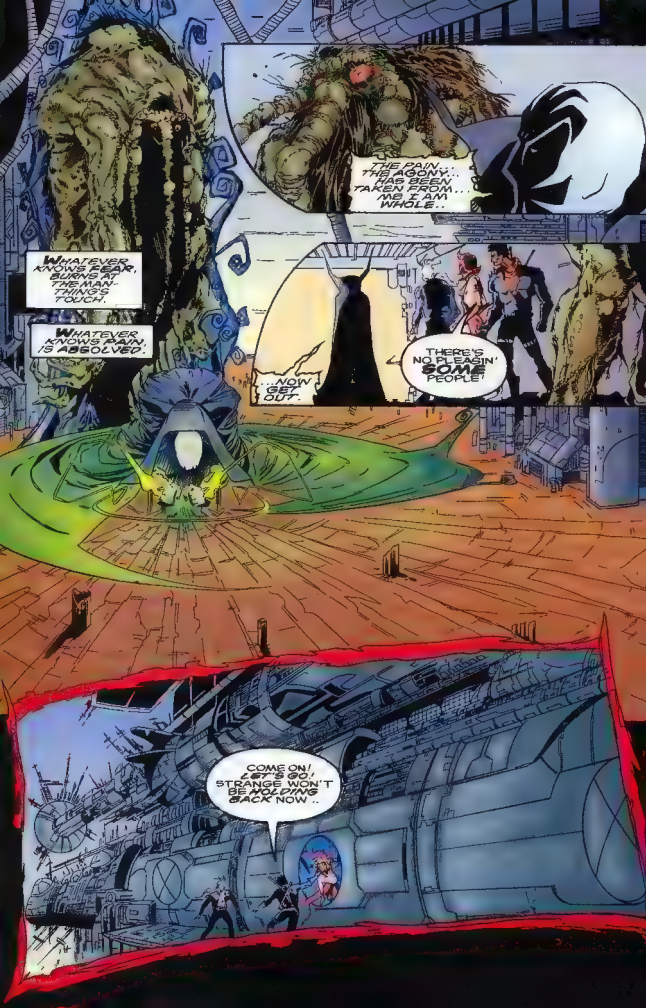
STRANGE'S WARNING RUBY IS MINDLESS AND ABSOLUTE
IN A TIDAL WAVE OF MYSTERIOUS MAGICK
HE EXPLODES FROM THE CHAMBER, ENGULFING ALL!
NOTHING WILL STOP HIM
NOTHING CAN!
EMERGENCY POWER RESTORED! CONTAIN THE DEMON!
TACTIC AGREED! NEGATORS TO MAXIMUM!
SECWARE TO COMMANDWARE SECURITY NEGATION BLAST HAVE WORKED! THE SPECIMEN'S POWER LEVELS HAVE RISEN...
...HE IS MYND! HE IS...
EEEK!!
HIM? STRANGE IS THE ONE?
THE PROGENITOR?
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT?
YOU MUST RELEASE ME! THIS SPECIMEN STRANGE OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT HE IS THE ONE!
HE IS THE PROGENITOR FROM WHICH THE MYND WILL SPRING!
WE DIDN'T KNOW! STRANGE SIMPLY SEEMED TO BE A SUITABLE CANDIDATE FOR ANALYSIS, AS YOU WERE
WE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT HE WAS!


BUT NOW WE DO! AND WE CAN DESTROY OUR IMMORTAL FOE BEFORE THE ENDLESS WAR EVER BEGINS!
FULL NEGATION POWER! CONTAIN THE ORGANICS!
OUTSIDE..
..THE MAN-THING RESPONDS IN SYMPATHY WITH THE VOLCANIC EMOTIONS OF THE BEING CALLED STRANGE.
THORNY LIMBS SPLIT OPEN THE METALLIC HIDE OF THE ALIEN GUEST
STRENGTH THAT CAN--AND ROUTINELY DOES--MATCH THE JAWS OF ALLIGATORS...
...SPLITS OPEN PLASTIC AND STEEL.
MAN-THING SMITES THE CRAFT.
HE TASTES DANGER IN THE AIR, AND KNOWS THE SCENT...

COMMANDWARE BEYT TO ALL FUNKTIONARIES! CONTAIN STRANGE! DESTROY HIM!
COMMANDWARE CORE ROUTER: THE DAMAGED HEK SYSTEMS, FUZZ NEGATTON POWER WILL SHORTLY BEAT YOUR DISPOSAL
NO, BEYT!
I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO DESTROY STRANGE, NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK HE WILL BECOME.
THE CLAVE HAS DONE ENOUGH DAMAGE TO THIS TIME-LINE.
YOU WILL RELEASE US ACT NOW.
BUT NOW NEGATION POWER IS BACK ONLINE!
AAIIEEKK!
UGHHN!
YOU ARE BUT ANOTHER WITH NOTHING OF THE POWER OF THE TRUE OTHER-BEING!
AND YOU NO LONGER SERVE A USEFUL PURPO--
SHWUKK!!

GUESS HIS ANTI-MAGICK TRICKS JUST DON'T HAVE THE SAME EFFECT ON ORDINARY JOES LIKE ME.
C'MON, LADY. I THINK IT'S TIME TO LEAVE.
AT LAST! SOMEONE WITH A PLAN THAT APPEALS TO ME!
SHUT UP, MYSTIC!
UH-OH.
STRANGE!
I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE STRENGTHS OF THE CLAVE ARGUMENTS.
STRANGE IS BERSERK... UNHEEDING.
INCANDESCENT. HE ERUPTS FROM THE WALL, ATTACKING ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING.
...FRIEND OR FOE.
THE CLAVE EXPERIMENTS HAVE DRIVEN HIM. MAD!
HE'S GOING TO KILL US, TOO!


WRACKED WITH TRAUMA THAT IS NOT HIS OWN...
...MAN-THING SENSES HE IS CLOSE TO THE HEART OF THE SEARING PAIN
THE MAN-THING'S POWER IS EMPATHIC.
HE SHARES IN EMOTIONS BORROWS THEM.
...ABSORBS THEM
DRAWN TO STRANGE'S AGONY, HE TOUCHES THE HEART OF PAIN..
AND DRAWS IT AWAY.
HIS DULL, INSENSITIVE BODY, THAT MASS OF VEGETABLE ROOTS, CUSHIONS THE EMOTIVE TIDE...
HOLEEEE...
YOU SAID IT, BLADE.!
OH DEAR. HOW DISGUSTINGLY LIKE MALE BONDING...

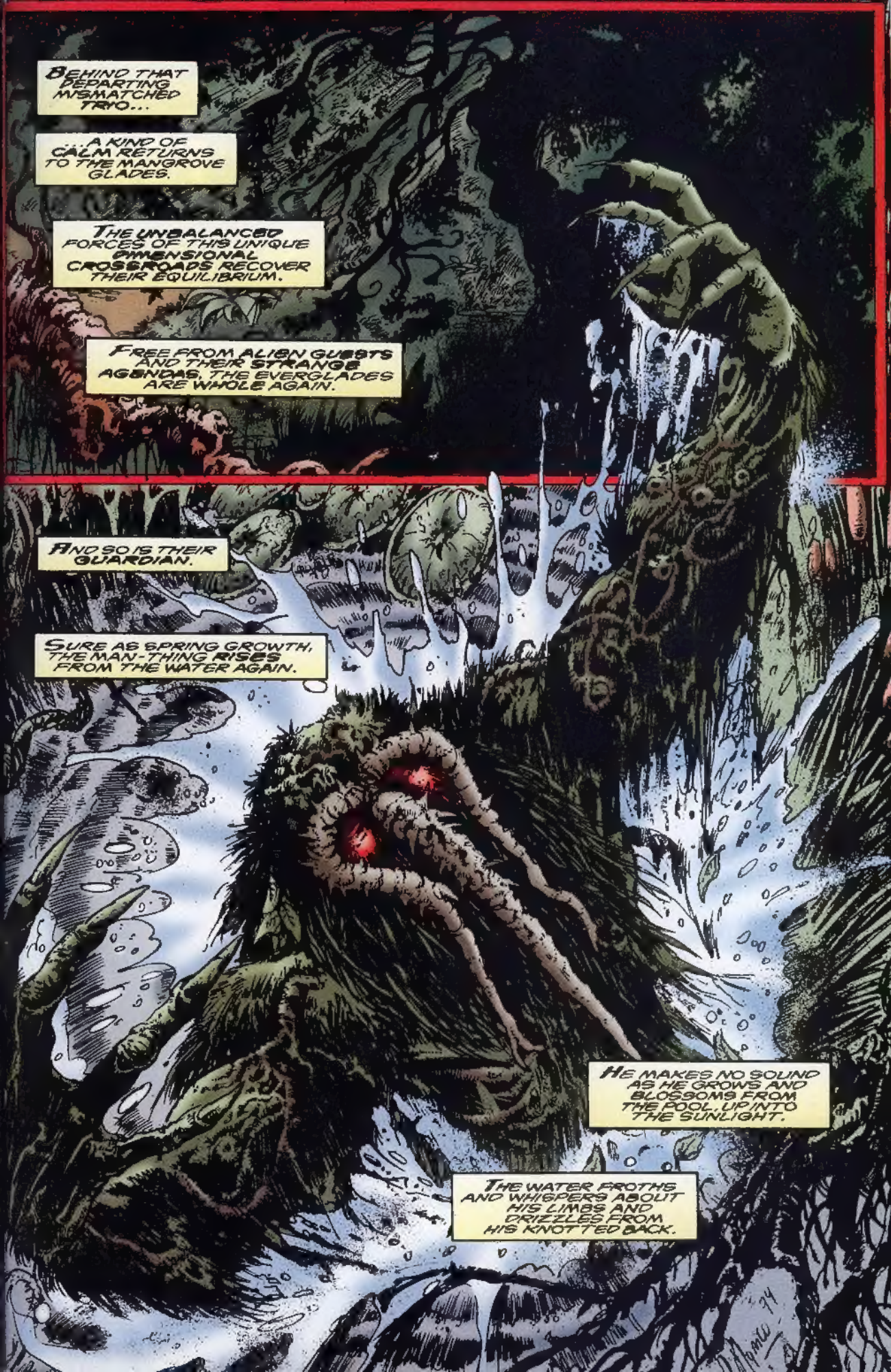

WHATEVER KNOWS FEAR, BURNS AT THE MAN-THINGS TOUCH.
WHATEVER KNOWS PAIN, IS ABSOLVED.
THE PAIN... THE AGONY... HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM ME. I AM WHOLE..
THERE'S NO PLEASIN' SOME PEOPLE!
...NOW GET OUT.
COME ON! LET'S GO! STRANGE WON'T BE HOLDING BACK NOW..

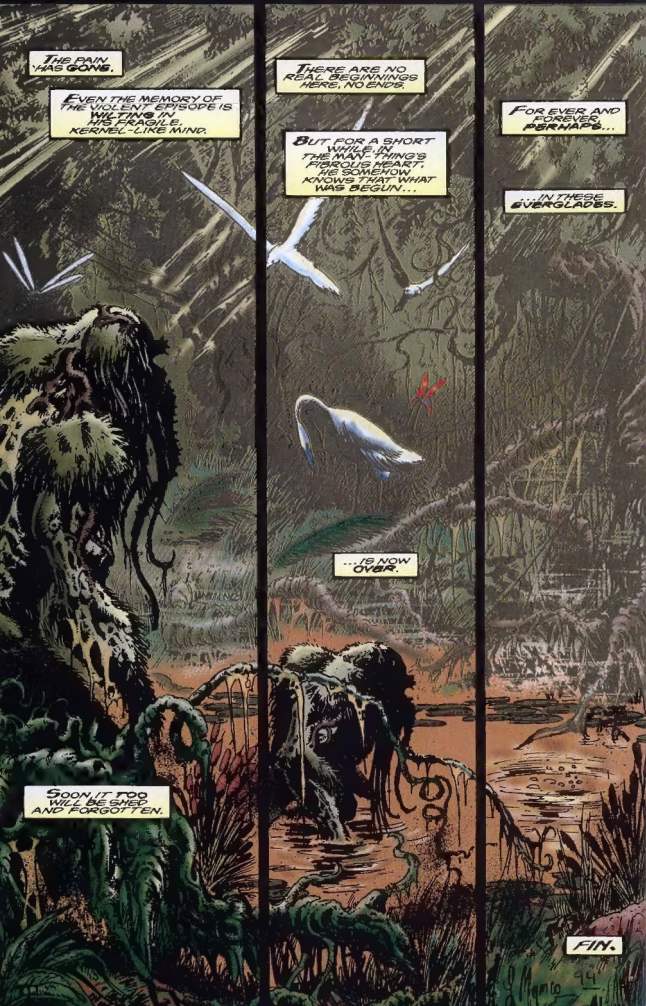
...SEE WHAT I MEAN?
SHADES OF NYOGTHA!
STRANGE STRIKES...
KKOOM!
THE POWER HE UNLEASHES LEAVES SCAPE STUNNED, WANDA REELING, AND MODRED SICK TO THE STOMACH

STRANGE COLLAPSES SPACE-TIME AROUND THE CLAVE CRAFT...
...AND EXPLODES IT BACK THROUGH THE NEXUS OF REALITIES.
...BACK TO WHENEVER IT CAME!

STRANGE! WAIT!
HE WON'T ANSWER--HE DOESN'T CARE. HE'S FREE AGAIN...
...THAT'S ALL THAT CONCERNS HIM.
I'D SAY SO... JUST A MUNCH, OF COURSE.
WAS THAT THING DESTROYED?
SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE DEEP CHARRED CRATER, THE SMOKING BLAST RADIUS...
SHUT UP, MODRED. BLADE'S QUESTION DOESN'T DESERVE A RUDE ANSWER.
I THINK STRANGE MADE THE CLAVE CRAFT COLLAPSE BACK THROUGH THE NEXUS THAT BROUGHT IT HERE.
IT'S RETURNED TO WHATEVER DARK FUTURE CREATED IT.
AND DO WE WANT TO CONSIDER OUR ROLE IN THAT FUTURE?
EFFECTIVELY, WE SAVED STRANGES LIFE.
WHAT IF HE IS THE ARCHITECT OF SOME FUTURE ABOMINATION?
WE CAN'T CONDEMN STRANGE FOR WHAT HE MIGHT BECOME. WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT.

THE NEXUS OF REALITIES LINK OUR WORLD WITH MANY POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS.
IT MAY BE THAT THIS LAWLY KYND FUTURE IS ONE WE'LL NEVER SEE.
BUT IF THERE'S A CHANCE--ANY CHANCE--OF IT HAPPENING HERE, WE SHOULD BE READY.
I'M SURPRISED AT YOUR CONCERN, THOUGH. MYSTIC, A WORLD DOMINATED BY MAGICK?
DOESN'T THAT APPEAL TO YOUR TWISTED APPETITES?
NOT IF I WEREN'T IN CHARGE OF IT...
HEY! ONE LAST QUESTION...
...EITHER ONE OF YOU FEEL LIKE EXPLAINING TO ME JUST THE HELL WENT DOWN HERE TODAY?
I'LL TRY, BLADE...
...BUT I'M NOT SURE WHERE TO BEGIN...


BEHIND THAT DEPARTING MISMATCHED TRIO...
...A KIND OF CALM RETURNS TO THE MANGROVE GLADES.
THE UNBALANCED FORCES OF THIS UNIQUE DIMENSIONAL CROSSROADS RECOVER THEIR EQUILIBRIUM.
FREE FROM ALIEN GUESTS AND THEIR STRANGE AGENDAS, THE EVERGLADES ARE WHOLE AGAIN.
AND SO IS THEIR GUARDIAN.
SURE AS SPRING GROWTH, THE MAN-THING RISES FROM THE WATER AGAIN.
HE MAKES NO SOUND AS HE GROWS AND BLOSSOMS FROM THE POOL, UP INTO THE SUNLIGHT.
THE WATER FROTHS AND WHISPERS ABOUT HIS LIMBS AND DRIZZLES FROM HIS KNOTTED BACK.


THE PAIN WAS GONE.
EVEN THE MEMORY OF THE VIOLENT EPISODE IS WILTING IN HIS FRAGILE, KERNEL-LIKE MIND.
SOON, IT TOO WILL BE SHED AND FORGOTTEN.
THERE ARE NO REAL BEGINNINGS HERE, NO ENDS.
BUT FOR A SHORT WHILE IN THE MANY-THING'S FIBROUS HEART, HE SOMEHOW KNOWS THAT WHAT WAS BEGUN...
...IS NOW OVER.
FOR EVER AND FOREVER PERHAPS...
...IN THESE EVERGLADES.
FIN.